

Covert, but not sinister

Basically the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency isn't supposed to get publicity, and when it does it's usually because something has gone wrong.

But, for once, the story of a CIA operation has become public and the news is good. Now that the operation is completed, it has been revealed that the agency took part in completing the evacuation of the Ethiopian Jews who had been left in the Sudan after an Israeli-sponsored airlift had to be halted.

That initial effort by Israel had to be abandoned after premature publicity, because as part of the Arab world the Sudanese government could not officially condone an Israeli operation within its territory. Because of the sensitivities involved, the U.S. government hasn't even officially admitted that the CIA took over in the place of the Israelis, but it is now clear that it did, and that it did a good job.

This will help dispel the notion that whatever is done covertly must in itself be sinister. That's not necessarily so, and here is a case in point. The CIA had the capability to help these refugees and it was advisable that it be done quietly — and so the CIA was used.

We congratulate the CIA for doing well a job that was well worth doing, even if the agency still cannot publicly accept any such congratulations.